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CRYPTO

Crypto: Hidden or Secret, from the Greek kruptos meaning hidden

"These are wonderful times, and it is thrilling to be living now, though it would thrill me even more to know that I could still be here a hundred or a thousand years hence, for this immediate future promises to be of intense interest, even excitement, certainly to the scientist."

J.L.B. Smith, Old Fourlegs: The Story of the Coelacanth

Close up of an Asian platter from the mid 1700's showing the Killing of a Yeti or Yeren : Piece was auctioned in 1998 by William Doyle Galleries

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Editors Statement

1998 nears to an end. The last year of the millenium begins and soon the new one begins. We live in a privileged time and in a peculiar century. Man has traveled to the moon and sent unmanned exploratory satellites to the planets and beyond. Man has started to clone animals and unravel the genetic make up. Yet, man has destroyed each other and the areas around us. We live in a time when one person can believe in an ideal and at a few keystrokes send that ideal around the world.

Yet, perhaps more than ever our society is changing. The media surrounds us with their ever-present connotations. Murder and suicide, depression and hope, death and life. These are not new problems, they are ever present and surround us and our ancestors.

This time of the year many people experience remorse and remember what could have been in their lives. What if I made that one decision different? What if I handled that one situation different? What if? We hope that our lives have had some meaning, that we have left a mark on those that know us. But have any of us? Can we prove that our lives have had meaning?

Regardless of the choices we have made in our lives our futures are present in our past decisions. That single fact cannot be changed. An act made a decade ago does not change fifty years from now or a hundred years. No one may remember the act, but it still remains the same. Dwelling on personal accounts of the past makes us human, reaching beyond to the next step is what makes us live another day.

This is not just rhetoric but a statement of belief. Do we not believe in what we do everyday? You go to work, you may not care for your job, but you go anyway. Why? Ask yourself that question. You decide to believe in a religion. Why? You decide things everyday without asking why, it is instinct and reflex. But, you choose to believe in a science that many feel is foolish and unwarranted. Why?

Why believe in cryptozoology?

Is it that we want to know what is out there? That we want to know that there is more on this planet than we know? Why? Is it the incurable curiosity of mankind or the stubbornness of mankind not to give up hope?

I once had a teacher at school, one day she asked: "Why do you believe such a thing as Sasquatch exists? Can you prove it?". At the time I was only 14 or so, and did not know how to react or answer. Today I could state the various reasons why I should believe in the existence of unknown hominids, state the theories and recant the stories. But has anything changed over the ten odd years since that question? No. I still cannot put a finger on the reason I believe that such a creature exists, it is more a matter of faith. Do I take all reports at theories at face value? No, they must be dealt with on an individual basis. But, the core of it all is that faith that something is present, something is there.

The same rationale can be made towards other animals that cryptozoology holds dear. The romantic in me wants to believe that not all the megafauna is extinct, that not all dinosaur species are extinct. However slim, the possibilities exist that the species is not extinct that it remains someplace in an isolated patch of forest, jungle or swamp.

Our lives are run on belief, on faith. We do not know if today will be our last on Earth. We do not know what the next minute will bring. Our lives are like a tightrope, and we are the walkers on that rope. A small miscalculation and we fall. What keeps us balanced is belief in what we are doing, and faith in that we approach it with honesty and sincerity.

I believe, do you?

Craig Heinselman
Editor/Publisher

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CRYPTO
c/o Craig Heinselman
135 Elm St, Apt. 81
Milford, NH 03055 USA

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The South Island Kokako

The annals of recent natural history contain several references to new taxonomic classifications of avian life. These include newly described as well as previously thought extinct representatives. These avian discoveries are often overshadowed by new mammalian discoveries, and become brief news briefs or footnotes in dissertations. This is not a hard and fast rule, but if one where to ask a person if they had heard of a Poouli (*Melamprosops phaeosoma*) or of a Vu Quang Ox (*Pseudoryx nghetinhensis*), they would in most likelihood state the latter. Why a mammal is better known than a bird is a matter of debate, however the searches and discoveries of these birds are no less as fascinating as those of other classifications. The South Island Kokako of New Zealand is an example of one such search that has continued for many decades.

The kokako consist of two sub species, the North Island Kokako (*Callaeas cinerea wilsoni*) and the South Island Kokako (*Callaeas cinerea cinerea*). The kokako make up one third of the wattlebird family, a group of birds found no where else in the world. This family consists of the kokako, huia and the saddlebacks. All of these birds combined equal less than 10,000 in number, and hence each is rare and endangered. The South Island Saddleback () exists on only a few small islands near Stewart Island, these being Kaimohu, Big Island and Muttonbird Islands, their population is estimated at less than 700. The North Island Saddleback (*Philesturnus carunculatus rufusater*) survives on various islands of the coast of North Island, these being Hen Islandand others in the Hauraki Gulf, their population is estimated at close to 4,000. The huia (*Hateralocha acutirostris*) is believed extinct as no confirmed sightings have been made for over 80 years. The North Island Kokako (*Callaeas cinerea wilsoni*) survives in various areas of North Island with a population estimated at around 1500. The South Island Kokako (*Callaeas cinerea cinerea*) survived on the South Island, but is believed extinct as no confirmed sighting has occurred since 1961. Of the five birds making up the wattlebird family, 2/5 are now thought extinct. There are some however that feel these two are not gone, and may still survive in small populations. The most promising of the two, the South Island Kokako, henceforth the following acronyms will be used; NIK for the North Island subspecies and SIK for the South Island subspecies, may well survive as such it is the main subject of this article.

Biological Diversity

New Zealand formed from the super-continent of Gondwanaland some 80 million years ago. This Southern Hemisphere super-continent of Gondwanaland was made up of what is now known as Africa, Australia, Antarctica, and South America, additionally Madagascar, India and New Zealand constituted the land mass. Once part of the mego-continent of Pangea, Gondwanaland and its counterpart Laurasia separated through continental shift caused by tectonic plate movements. This is the same phenomenon that causes the shifting of land masses today.

Through its early separation from other land masses New Zealand became an isolated ecosystem with native species being predominately non-mammalian. Those species that did live on the land area did so either by migration or where there from the separation. New Zealand boasts some of the oldest terrestrial life on Earth. The beech forests originated in South America, and the ones on New Zealand (as once part of South America via the super-continent) are perhaps the longest surviving forests on Earth.

Additionally New Zealand boasts the tuatara (*Sphenodon punctatus* and *Spehodon guntheri*) an archaic reptile that has virtually remained unaltered for over 200 million years. The primitive genus Leiopelma frongs (*Leipelma hochstetteri, L. hamiltoni* and *L. archeyi*) are found in New Zealand as well. These constitute the oldest lineage of frogs alive today, sharing characteristics with fish and lacking characteristics associated with other frogs (aside from an American cousin *Ascaphus truei).*

There where several bat species present on the mainland the. New Zealand short tailed bats (*Mystacina tuberculata* and *Mystacina robusta*) and the lobe lipped bat of New Zealand (*Chalinolobus tuberculatus*) as well as later the arrival of pinnipeds like the New Zealand sea lion (*Phocartos hooker*) and the New Zealand fur seal (*Arctocephalus forsteri)*. But lacking where

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the mammalian carnivores associated with other continental landmasses. Through this atypical ecosystem many of the indigenous birds became either gigantic in size or flightless (or both).

With the arrival of humans on the islands, between 1000 and 2000 years ago, the Edenistic land changed. Alien species where introduced, and present species where destroyed. With such an isolated population of animals any foreign introductions would cause a ripple in the lifestyles of the inhabitants. Since then many species have become extinct, or believed extinct, among them the moa, huia, and SIK.

Alien Introduction

Species introduction in any ecosystem causes unknown and unpredictable events. The introduced species may not be suitable for the environment and itself expire, but in many cases the present species of the ecosystem cannot survive the new introduction. If it is a predator, then the present species may not have sufficient defenses against the predatoriness. If the new species that has a fast reproductive rate then the land itself may not have sufficient resources to sustain the new and old species. These are but a few of the possible results of this introduction.

New Zealand has undertaken a large introduction of species. These include not only domesticated species for agriculture, but game animals as well. Mammalian species have been introduced very virtually every continent of the world, ranging from six species of wallaby to seven species of deer, rats, hares and ferrets. A failed attempt was even made by Sir George Grey around 1876 to introduce zebra. Various finches, pheasant, owl, and blackbirds round out the myriad of avian introduced species. Additionally large numbers of insects have been introduced in New Zealand purposely as biological agents to control various problems. In total 242 of these agents have been introduced up to 1992 (the first in 1874 with a ladybug), of this only 22 have been reported as actually succeeding in the purpose of their release.

Discoveries

There have been many new and rediscovered avian life forms over the last century, and these continue up until the present day. In New Zealand several such occurrences have happened. In 1948 Dr. Geoffrey Orbell in eastern Fiordland of South Island rediscovered the takahe (Porphyrio mantelli), a bird infamous for disappearing and reappearing, currently less than 200 takahe are known to exist. The Auckland Island Rail (*Rallus muelleri*) was last captured in 1966 and the Fijian Barred-Wing Rail (*Nesoplopeus poeciloptera*) was last captured in 1973. Each was a single specimen and no more have been found since. The kokapo (*Strigops habroptilus*) was rediscovered on Stewart Island in the late 1970's, however only around 50 of these birds are known to exist today. In 1997 a new subspecies of snipe was found on the small island of Jaquemart south of Campbell Island.

Across the world more species are discovered these include the jocotoco from the Ecuadorean Andes in 1997 (reported in 1998), a new robin from Africa in 1996 (reported in 1998), and Gunnisons sage grouse (*Centrocercus minimus)* a proposed new species from North America in 1997. This list goes on and includes Jame's flamingo (*Phoenicoparrus jamesi*, 1958, Bolivia), Eyrean grasswren (*Amytornis goyderi*, 1961, Australia), Vo Quy's pheasant (*Lophura hatinhensis*, 1964, Vietnam), Poouli (*Melamprosops phaeosoma*, 1973, Hawaii) and MacGillivray's petrel (*Pterodroma macgillivrayi*, 1984, Ngau Island) to name a few.

The presence of so many new and rediscovered species of birds lends credence to those who report unusual sightings. They act as a circumstantial negative to compare present and recent reports of cryptic birds. The SIK is one such bird that requires consideration. Although the last confirmed sighting was in 1961, there have been over 140 auditory and visual reports since then and several expeditions to search for the bird. Physical evidence has been analyzed and a government agency involved with some searches.

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Kokapo Takahe

South Island Kokako North Island Kokako

Kokako

Maori legend has it that the kokako was the only bird that brought Maui a drink of water upon his return from the sun. In return Maui stretched the kokako's legs enabling it to run and ascend trees quickly. Below is a table depicting the ecology and morphology of the kokako in general.

Table I: Ecology / Morphology of Kokako

Ecology / Morphology	NIK (*Callaeas cinerea wilsoni*)	SIK (*Callaeas cinerea cinerea*)
Size	50 cm	50 cm *
Weight	.3 kg	.3 kg *
Wattle Color	Bluish Wattle	Orange-Yellow Wattle
Territory	6.5 to 80 ha (1)	6.5 to 80 ha *
Egg Clutches	September to February, 1-3 eggs	September to February , 1-3 eggs*
Feeding	Omnivores	Omnivores *
Habitat	Diverse vegetation (2)	Diverse vegetation *
Nest Height	Average 15 m height (3)	Unknown
Wattle Color	Bluish Wattle	Orange-Yellow Wattle
Sexual Dimorphism	Nil	Nil

(1) Territory varies depending on localized conditions, (i.e. logging, forest make-up, etc.)
(2) Habitation varies along the same line as territory, the local conditions affect the habitation
(3) Based on samplings done July 1992 - June 1993 by DoC during a productivity and ecology study of NIK
(*) Based upon similarities between NIK and SIK; little is known of variation in ecology and behavior between the two subspecies so the correlation is made that they are similar

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Both kokako subspecies once flourished in their habitats. It was not until the nineteenth century and the increasing in agricultural needs of New Zealand and the introduction of predatory mammals like rats, possums and stoats that the kokako populations started to decline. Being a specialized bird with an elongated nesting period the changes in the habitat through burning and logging had a negative effect on the birds.

Although little is know about the behavior of the SIK it can be taken that, as they are subspecies, they are similar to the NIK. Much has been learned of the NIK over the last few decades, most of it fairly recent during the 1990's with the New Zealand Department of Conservation's (DoC) research by management approach.

The recovery plan for the NIK was created for certain objectives **(4)**

1) Determine the relative importance of the causes of the current decline of North Island kokako.
2) Determine successful management techniques and strategies for the conservation of North Island kokako.
3) Establish viable kokako populations on islands.
4) Develop rearing techniques for kokako in captivity
5) Determine gender of single birds holding territories.
6) Survey potentially important but poorly known populations.
7) Monitor critical populations.
8) Monitor all kokako work and be prepared to respond to change.
9) Promote public interest and involvement in kokako conservation

This plan has for the most part been successful, and currently there are roughly 370 females capable of breeding **(5)** with the goal of 1000 by the year 2020 **(5)**. Currently populations are increasing and further information of mating and ecological needs are being found. If the SIK does survive, the research done on the NIK will become invaluable in resurrecting a viable SIK population.

South Island Kokako (SIK)

In September of 1998 two hunters reported hearing an odd birdcall and a quick glimpse of a bird believed to be a kokako in a forest of the Inangahua area. The two men reported their auditory/visual sighting to Timberlands West Coast (TWC) who in turn contacted Nelson based ornithologist Rhys Buckingham (founding member of South Island Kokako Investigation Team or Sikit). Mr. Buckingham entered the area, but due to poor weather had to leave. He was planning on returning to the area in October for a survey that would last until January 1999.

This report, although scanty in detail, constitutes the most recent possible sighting of the SIK since the last confirmed sighting in 1961. Since 1980 Rhys Bucki.gham has collected 146 total observations of possible kokako on South Island. Stewart Island off the southern coast of South Island constitutes 65% of the reports, but only 18% of these reports are of a visual sighting, the rest are either auditory reports (calls and wing flaps) or physical signs (typically moss grubbings).

Are these reports alone sufficient to state empirically that the SIK exists still? They are intriguing, but like so many reports of other mystery animals they are in and of themselves insufficient to prove the existence of this animal. What is at hand are reports by hunters and hikers, as well as some possible cries of a SIK on tape. The cries cannot be proven to be from a kokako, nor can the sightings be necessarily attributed to a kokako. Like many bird sightings the view is quick. Physical evidence of moss grubbings is also of importance. But it too cannot be held directly to one specific type of bird.

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"To confirm the existence of the SIK we would hope for sightings of a bird in the same area by two or more skilled ornithologists, either at the same time or on different occasions. The NZ Ornithological Society Rare Birds Committee are asked to look at and judge any significant records we receive. So far nothing in the last 3 decades has convinced them of the existence of SIK..." **(6)**

The above is how Ian Flux of the Department of Conservation (DoC) has stated the basic proof required for the existence of the SIK to be established. Ian Flux has been involved with the NIK recovery plan as well as partaking in several SIK searches. These searches being one in 1995 in the area of the Buller River and in 1997 in the Abut Head area. The techniques used in the searches are the same used in studying the NIK for population estimates and are as follows:

"Listening was done every 200-300 m., beginning at first light. If birds were not heard singing on their own, the following sequence was used:
1) 2 mew calls, followed by a 5 minute listening period.
2) 3 mew calls, followed by a 5 minute listening period
3) 30 seconds of local song, followed by a 5 minute listening period

Local song is considered imperative, and it has been suggested that local mew calls (generally considered not to have local dialects) may be necessary as well.

This method was found to locate 64 - 75% of the resident territorial birds) confirmed afterwards by territory mapping). Often one bird or pair is mistaken for two territories, or territories are overlooked. Birds may be called off territory by the use of tapes. Even when the kokako in an area as well known, they are located only 52 - 82% of visits to their territories. Survey results give general figures on bird numbers and location, but cannot be used to interpret anything but gross population trends." **(7)**

Additionally for SIK surveys the recordings of the NIK are used as no substantiated recording is available for the SIK **(8)**.

The sightings of the possible SIK are usually similar, with a silver appearance being the predominant characterization and the wattles on the throats being next. Intriguing there is at least one report of a blue wattled kokako on South Island **(9)**. This is particularly interesting, as the blue wattle is associated with the NIK only and an orange-yellow wattle with the SIK. The report comes from a Barry Donovan. For 15-20 years he has seen five unidentified birds near Abut Head in South Westland. He reports to Rhys Buckingham that on October 24, 1996 through binoculars "sky blue wattle" was seen on a bird. Mr. Donovan at one time played a tape of a juvenile NIK and a blue wattled bird flew with 4 meters of him. The reports intrigued Rhys Buckingham who then conducted two separate investigations in the area of Donovans reports during 1997.

On September 10, 1997 Barry Donovan, John Kendrick and Rhys Buckingham ventured to the area near Whataroa River. The search was conducted with tapes of kokako calls. No results came out of this search when it ended September 14, 1997. A second investigation began November 24, 1997 with Rhys Buckingham, Barry Donovan, Ian Flux and Tim Cotter in the same general area. Again no results occurred by the conclusion of the search on November 28, 1997.

One important detail in the report is the blue wattle. This has for many years been a distinctive separation key to the two kokako subspecies. However, it appears that the wattle coloration is variable. This has been demonstrated by observations of the NIK by researchers of orange-wattled birds, most notably by Ian Flux **(10)** in 1996 at Kaharoa forest near Rotorua where locals knew the bird for at least seven years. Ian Flux also reports that a hunter spotted one of these orange-wattled kokako (OWK) in the Urewera National Park, an area with a strong NIK population. Additionally there are other reports of variable wattle colors from 1957 and 1971 on South Island. From specimens of the SIK the base of the wattle is a bluish color, and at quick glimpse could cause a report of a blue wattled SIK.

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Physical Evidence: Feather Analysis

In 1996 a feather believed to be from a SIK was discovered in a north Westland forest. The feather was collected as part of a Timberlands West Coast survey of indigenous forest ecology. This feather would be the first solid evidence of the SIK existence if it were proven conclusively to be that of a kokako. The Department of Conservation with the assistance of the Department of Ecology of Massey University undertook DNA analysis of the feather.

A technique called Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) was utilized to amplify the genetic material of the feather. PCR was originated by biochemist Kary B. Mullis in 1983, Mullis later shared a 1993 Nobel Prize in chemistry with biochemist Michael Smith. What this process does is utilize the properties of the natural enzymes known as polymerases. The function of these enzymes, which are present in all living objects, is to duplicate genetic material. What PCR does is through three steps in a laboratory it duplicates genetic material allowing for a sufficient quantity to be available for testing or experimentation. The genetic material thus can be analyzed and the unique genetic characteristics of a species can be matched.

The following is a summary of the findings of the test from the purported kokako feather from an unpublished report by the Department of Conservation **(11)**:

"Analysis was based on the 12s and 16s mitochondrial genes. Sequences of about 215bp were amplified. RNA of the test feather was identical to that of a known blackbird feather, and very different to that of a kokako."

The blackbird mentioned **(12)** was the European Blackbird (*Turdus merula*). The blackbird being one of the first avian species introduced by Europeans in New Zealand.

Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)

Based on the evidence of genetic and morphological examination of the feather, the SIK has been ruled out by the Department of Conservation.

Is There Hope?

Is there hope for the SIK survival? That is a difficult question to answer. Definitive proof is lacking, no photographs or definable physical traces have been found. The recordings of a reported SIK from Stewart Island are inconclusive without the specimen present that made or makes a similar cry. Where then can we go from here?

Many people would like to see this species survive. But, the ultimate fate may be that even if a few kokakos are found they may well be so few as to offer little in the way of a genetic pool to resurrect the species. A sufficient amount of data is available based on NIK studies that would help save the population of SIK, but this is a catch-22. First the South Island Kokako must be proven to exist, then a survival plan can begin. Once the plan begins a viable breeding pair must be captured as well. The hunt continuous for perhaps one of the worlds rarest birds.

"I just need positive evidence of one bird." - Rhys Buckingham

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News Note: Giant Flying Squirrel

Peter Zahler who rediscovered the woolly flying squirrel (*Eupetaurus cinereus*) in 1994 writes an account of that discovery and subsequent findings in the October 1998 edition of *Wildlife Conservation* magazine. Mr. Zahler went to the Himalayan region of Northern Pakistan to look for this animal. No squirrel was found during that trip. In 1994 he returned again to the area. The first hint of the animal came from police, who when questioned about the animal said that villagers collected salajit (hardened squirrel urine) and sold it as an aphrodisiac.

Shortly therafter a severed paw was found, possibly from the elusive animal. By chance salajit collectors came by the camp and made a deal to capture a squirrel for Peter Zahler. In a few hours the collectors returned, and with them a woolly squirrel. In 1995 he returned again and with the knowledge gleamed from 1994 was able to study the animal. In 1996 Zahler returned again to steady the squirrel more through radio telemetry. Also a study is to be conducted as to whether salajit is really squirrel urine.

The animal lives in caves at elevations of 8000 to 12000 feet. In order to reach the caves one needs to climb up to one, or rappel down to one. Due to this environment a partial explanation as to why it remained a mystery is gleamed. Previously this squirrel was thought extinct being known from only a handful of skulls and skins and having the last report from a westerner, Colonel Lorimer, in 1924. Additionally the area is hostile in environment, with mountains to 20,000 feet and human populations speaking a myriad of languages thus making trekking and communications dangerous and troublesome.

Further studies will need to be conducted to judge the environmental dangers caused by man toward the woolly squirrel, the world's largest squirrel.

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News Note: Sturgeon of the Lake

On October 20, 1998 a sturgeon 75 inches in length and weighing 105.5 pounds was found dead in Lake Harriet, situated in Minneapolis, Minnesota.. It has been estimated that the fish may have been upwards of 90 years old and responsible for periodic reports of a shark like creature in the lake.

How the fish arrived in this lake is still a mystery. As in all mysteries there are a multitude of theories. These include, a dumped dead sturgeon or nearly dead sturgeon into the lake in recent days, an introduced species decades ago, and that sturgeons became locked into the lake thousands of years ago prior to the formation of the Minnehaha Falls (swimming up the Mississippi River into Minnehaha Creek and then into Lake Harriet).

Many favor the last theory of a remnant population of sturgeons. Other lakes not known to have a population of these fish have had reports by fisherman of large fish. The size described by these fishermen exceeds that of other fish (muskie, walleye, trout, etc.) and closely matches that of the sturgeon. If other lakes can hold these fish, then the possibility that the 80 odd foot deep Lake Harriet could as well exists.

Regardless of the truth, the fact is that a large sturgeon was in the lake. Additionally there are those who theorize that some lake cryptids are large sturgeon or other large fish. In any case the Loch Harriet Monster is found and tests are to be conducted by the Division of Natural Resources (DNR) in Minnesota to try and determine the age of the animal.

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Sudden Mass Extinctions DO NOT Occur

By Allan Edward Munro

Editors Note: The theories expressed in this article are not necessarily the views of this publication. But, as a forum for discussion opposing view points are welcome.

Given as evidence against the suggestion that mokele-mbembe is a surviving sauropod, and similar identities for cryptids involving extant members of a taxonomic order considered extinct, is the fact that at intervals, as seen in the fossil record, old fauna disappears on land and in the seas and new fauna emerges to take its place.

It is suggested that these disappearances are caused by sudden catastrophes, like the one 65 million years ago (mya) at the boundary of the Maastrichtian and Paleocene marking the end of the Cretaceous period and the beginning of the Palaeogene period. It has been said that this catastrophe was the result of an asteroid striking the Earth and wiping out the non-avian dinosaurs, some avian dinosaurs, long-necked pleiosaurs, panzer calamari, reef-building rudist bivalves and various other animal groups. The asteroid has been attributed to forming the Chicxulub Structure and for causing the presence of a layering of clay rich with iridium, a rare element on Earth (iridium spike). Other mass extinctions include the event 245 mya between the Tartarian and Scythian (boundary of Permian and Triassic) when a large number of protomammals disappeared and the extinction 35 mya during the Paleocene (boundary of Eocene and Oligocene) when more mammals disappeared. It has been theorized that a twin star exists to our Sun or an undiscovered planet exists that causes asteroids to stroke the Earth, thus causing mass extinctions, every 26 million years.

However, no mass extinctions other than the event 65 mya are associated with an iridium spike or asteroid impact. The 10-km wide Manicouagan Structure of Canada, which was formed by an asteroid 220 mya should, according to supporters of asteroid impacts, have been large enough to have triggered a mass extinction. The larger 100-km wide Popigai Structure of Siberia formed 40 mya is also not associated with mass extinctions or an iridium spike.

Iridium spikes are commonly found in the geological record and are caused by natural processes on Earth. Mass extinctions on land and sea are related. But, iridium spikes and asteroid impacts are not a related phenomenon. There are other patterns in mass extinctions, such as the way large warm-blooded animals are hit in mass extinctions and that before they were present there were no mass extinctions among large land tetrapods. 245 mya the protomammals were hit, 65 mya the dinosaurs were hit and 35 mya various mammalian groups were hit and around the same time there were mass extinctions in the seas. All these extinctions being gradual.

Theories of gradual extinctions have been challenged by rarification analysis, a calculation of how many genera would be found in more than one formation of samples of specimens if each formation were equal. This is possible in the case of dinosaurs, the presence of which is often based only upon shed teeth whilst many types of dinosaurs, including modern birds, lack teeth. It is also easier to distinguish the types of carnivorous dinosaurs by teeth than herbivorous dinosaurs. However, plankton have a greater fossil record than dinosaurs. Some plankton groups vanished at around 65 mya, but they disappear in stages from 300,000 year before to 200,000 years after the iridium spike of 65 mya. This would not happen after an asteroid impact.

According to the Simpson Index, which is calculated as the squared fraction of the share of the population of a formation that is taken by a taxon the repeated for each taxon and divided by one, there is low equability among the dinosaurs of 65 mya as well as among the protomammals of the late Permian. From the Paleocene channel sand formations of Hell Creek in Montana (USA) there are dinosaur teeth, which are supposed to have been reworked from older sediments. These cannot have been reworked from the adjacent floodplain sediments as the hollows in the teeth bases are not filled with such sediments but are empty or filled with channel

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sand. The occurrence of fossil remains in channel sand is near the base, which means the teeth are from Paleocene non-avian dinosaurs. The extinctions of 65 mya were neither sudden nor immediately decimating to the dinosaurs as some dinosaurs survived beyond the late Cretaceous, including the birds.

The sea lily taxon Inadunata was presumed extinct since the mass extinction event between the Permian and Triassic, until the presence of the extant genus Guillecrinus was discovered. Another sea lily of the genus Concrinus was supposed extinct since the extinctions between the Eocene and Oligocene until the presence of two distinct species was known. The fossil record is full of anachronisms, some animals appear in the fossil record long after their supposed extinction and thus leaving long absences in the fossil record.

The extinction that supposedly destroyed the Inadunata saw the extinction of 98% of sea lilies, 78% of articulate brachiopods, 76% of bryozoans and 71% of the cephalopods as well as all blastoids, rugose and tabulate corals, sea scorpions and trilobites. In fact the bryozoa declined throughout the last 10 million years of the Permian and the tabulate and rugose corals declined all through the Permian. Half the families of planktonic forms are estimated to have become extinct 245 mya and filter feeders and forms with planktonic stages were hit around this same time.

Climate definetly played a part within mass extinctions. For example, towards the end of the Permian the rugose corals, bryozoans and fusilinid forms were becoming confined to the warm Tethys Sea. Also during this time more warm water articulate brachiopods were becoming extinct than cold water variations. Amongst these mass extinctions, the sponges, bivalves and gastropods associated with the Triassic period are estimated to have lost 27% of all their families. The marine extinctions of 65 mya also included shallow water forms like the reef-building bivalves (rudists) as well as deep-water plesiosaurs and plankton. These extinctions typically occurring before the iridium spike.

The extinctions in the sea 65 mya are explained as geological processes that caused the draining away of shallow marine habitats of the intercontinental seaways, thus having a cooling effect on the deeper waters. 300,000 years prior to the iridium spike there was a sudden drop in sea levels. Altogether the last 5 million years of the Cretaceous saw sea levels drop and climatic cooling, with climatic fluctuations occurring over the 3 million years prior to the iridium spike. Around 35 mya the extinctions were associated with a sea level drop causing cooler more seasonal climate with a steep decline in annual temperature around a million years before the Eocene and Oligocene boundary.

The tropical regions were more effected than the cooler Polar Regions and forms like early primates disappeared. This drop in sea level resulted in the loss of barriers to migration such as the Turgai Strait that had previously formed a barrier between mammals of Asia and Europe. The tapirs and small herbivores of Europe became displaced by waves of rhinoceri and riminants that had evolved in isolation in Asia. The brontotheres, a now extinct group of animals that were successful in Asia during the Eocene, became forced into decline there and were forced into extinction in North America.

The previously isolated communities of mammals were now in direct ecological competition as the colonized lands they could now reach and carried with them pathogens that had evolved in isolation. The transported pathogens were introduced into this alien environment in which the native populations had no immunities. This is what happened to the non-avian dinosaurs 65 mya when isolated groups of dinosaurs came into contact with each other by crossing land bridges that were previously submerged. This same situation occurred during the late Permian with the protomammals.

Large war blooded land animals are hit more often as they are more likely to migrate along land bridges and into competition with other types of land animals. On land as well as in the sea, the cooling climate was partly responsible for the mass extinctions. Dinosaurs that survived into the Paleocene (aside from birds) did so in warm tropical areas.

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There are no sudden mass extinctions, rather slow declines. The falls in sea level destroyed shallow marine habitats causing climatic changes that allowed large warm blooded land animals to cross land bridges into competition with established populations and spreading disease as they go. That at certain times more taxonomic lineages are forced into decline than at others does not mean that this is evidence that those lineages in decline left no descendants into the present day. We ourselves are descendents of the primates that declined 35 mya and birds are dinosaur descendants.

While many taxonomic groups leave long periods without fossil records, as the Inadunata did, the absence of evidence is not valid as evidence of absence. Fragmentary fossil evidence of post-Cretaceous sauropods or other supposed extinct groups might have been misidentified. The teeth of crocodilians have been mistaken for those of dinosaurs, so the possibility does exist. These misidentifications and miscataloged evidence may only to come to light upon the discovery of a living representative.

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Additional comments by the Editor:

Typically it is said that there have been five mass extintions (*The Big Five*) these being the Ordovician, Devonian, Permian, Triassic, and Cretaceous. Although there are some extinctions between these periods, they are generally not considered mass extinctions rather low level or background extinctions. Theories range the gamut of thought, from disease to asteroid impact. Each may have accounted for some extinctions, but it is unlikely that all these can be tied to one event.

Recent findings dealing with the Cretaceous extinction, often referred to as the K-T boundary, have uncovered chromium deposits of a non-terrestrial origin in the layers of this boundary, but not prior to or after the boundary. This suggests an incident occurred from an extraterrestrial origin as the 53Cr chromium isotope analyzed differs in abundance to that found on Earth. Although this is additional data for one theory, it does not necessarily negate the other theories nor does it necessarily project on any of the other mass extinction events. Additionally this does not prove irrevocably that a single occurrence was responsible for this extinction wave globally or regionally. These days mankind has a stronger influence on the environment of the planet, this could be our donation to mass extinctions of present, as man wipes out more animal and plant life daily then in previous history. But, we have done it gradually and that is perhaps our correlation to the previous extinctions.

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News Note: Controversial New Snake Genus

Raymond Hoser published an article in *Monitor* (Vol. 1 No. 10) in which he describes a new snake from Australia, *Pailsus pailsei* or the False King Brown Snake. Raymond Hoser is the author of several books, among these a series of two books dealing with the illegal trade of animals within Australia; Smuggled: The Underground Trade in Australia's Wildlife and Smuggled-2: Wildlife Trafficking, Crime and Corruption in Australia. Of interest is the fact that his books on smuggling of wildlife have created a ban on his books within Australia as well as lawsuits. But, of more interest is his definition of this new species and his rational for publishing it in a magazine he edits and is not peer-reviewed.

The False King Brown Snake according to the article has been confused with the King Brown Snake (*Pseudechis australis*) and the Western Brown Snake (*Pseudonaja muchalis*). His basis for the distinction of the False King Brown Snake from other species is that the morphological variations observed differ from that of known King Brown Snakes and the scalation and coloration vary from the King Brown Snake. Morphologically the snake is described as having a smaller and less broad head than King Brown Snakes. The coloration variation described is of a lack of certain colors on the ventral surface. While the scalation is described as having mostly single subcaudals, whilst the King Brown Snake has them usually paired (as does the Western Brown Snake). This is demonstrated via the following two quotes from his article: (1)

" The species seems to be most like Pseudechis australis, from which it can be differentiated by the following characters: More slender build, smaller adult size, smaller less broad and/or disti.ct head. Pailsus pailsei can apparently reliably be separated from Pseudechis australis from the same area (north-western Queensland only) by the lack of paired subcaudals (under 10) when compared with local Pseudechis australis (over 15). "

"Pailsus pailsei can be separated from Pseudonaja by the lack of paired subcaudals versus all or mainly divided, the lack of orange or brown ventral markings and it's whitish coloured rostral."

The holotype is a female captured November 19, 1984 at East Leichardt Dam in Queensland, Australia. The specimen was kept in captivity until it expired in 1990. At this time it was frozen. Another specimen, again a female, was captured three days prior to the holotype. This specimen in currently held in captivity. A hybrid has also been ruled out by Hoser based on two reasons, no such evidence exists in this case and that on his experience a hybrid will exhibit scalation intermediate between the parents.

Raymond Hoser has come under some criticism for his statements on this new species and genus reclassification. These fall into two general categories: 1) Description of the species/genus is not clear and 2) The media of choice should have been a peer-reviewed journal. For all intents and purposes the article he did publish has answered these categorical criticisms by creating a controversy. Below is Hoser's response to a criticism in which statements along the lines of publishing the article in a non-peer-reviewed publication are made: (2)

*"The opposing argument *which is mine in this instance) is that by publishing a "description" in a publication such as Monitor heightens the profile... for the publication. I could have published the paper (and an earlier similar one) elsewhere, but chose to go for Monitor after I became editor. From my view here, some criticisms of the paper are not justified. No descriptions I have read have been perfect, however I believe that in this case I have dotted my I's and crossed my t's more than adequately within the rules and spirit of such things. However time will tell if I am in fact right in my views."*

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When questioned about the classification of the snake in regards to morphology a similar response to the above was offered by Raymond Hoser: (3)

"The case for my views is at this stage compelling and I am not alone in these views - they seem general at this end..., but like with all scientific theories, I will gladly discard them if evidence to the contrary is produced and is compelling."

Regardless of how and why the article became published, the fact remains that it was and exists now. Similar articles have appeared in the past in various hobby magazines. The problem that can occur, and does appear to be is that this article created a lack of credibility for Raymond Hoser and the False King Brown Snake. And, even though he admits that he may be wrong, an inverted criticism can be aimed at Hoser's critics. For if the description is disputed then it to should be published.

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News Note: Hoan Kiem Turtle

Ha Dinh Duc, a professor at Hanoi National University, believes that the turtle spotted 38 times since 1991 is a new species. The Hoan Kiem Turtle is said to live in the Hoan Kiem Lake situated near the center of Hanoi. The lake is shallow and narrow and polluted yet the turtles some believe are long lived and grow to large sizes. Estimates on the size are 6 1/2 feet long and close to 400 pounds in weight. It has also been theorized that one of the turtles is the one that surrounds the legend of Le Loi in the 1400's.

The story of Le Loi goes that he as a warrior king held off some invading Chinese with the help of a heavenly sword. Afterwards Le Loi was on Lake Luc Thuy when a turtle emerged from the water and imlored the king to return the sword to the Dragon king. The sword began to shake and flew from its sheath and straight to the turtle. With sword in mouth the turtle dived into the water and a shimmering light emanated from the lack. Hence, the lake has since been called Ho Hoan Kiem or The Lake of the Returned Sword.

No definitive proof of the turtle's species, age or habits have been found as only a small number of photographs exist and a film made on March 24, 1998 and latter shown on television in Vietnam. How could a species exist for so long without being seen more often? That is the question mostly asked of the researchers. They feel that although the lake is swampish the turtle could live underwater indefinitely. Occasionally it would need to surface for area and some sun, and thus offering the occasional sighting of a large beast. As for food, again it is theorized that they will eat whatever they can get hold of.

As for the future of the turtle, it does not look promising. Ha Dinh Duc and Peter Pritchard, another researcher, believe that at most five turtles exist and that they are not breeding. With new improvements to the lake the chances for the species to propagate is diminished. With recent cementing of the area there appears to be only a few small harsh areas for a female to lay her eggs. The good news is that a project to study the lakes ecosystem and environment was approved in October 1998. Although the project will take two years to finish it does offer hope that the mystery of the Hoan Kiem Turtle will be solved , unfortunately the turtles themselves may be doomed.

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News Note: Th e Once Bounty on *Thylacinus cyanocephalus*

It had been reported that Tourism Tasmania was negotiating, and finalizing, a reward for proof of the survival of the Tasmanian tiger (*Thylacinus cyanocephalus*). The Tasmanian Tourist Office (Tourism Tasmania) was to be offering a reward of one million Australian dollars (approximately 370,000 pounds or $600,000 US) by insurance underwriter GRIP (Goodfellow, Rebecca, Ingrams, Pearson Limited). This insurance (with a reported premium of 1400 Australian dollars) is against the survival of the species. In other words the insurance would be paid if definitive proof of the survival of the Tasmanian tiger were produced. This program was to be part of a tourist attraction that coincides with the tour of "*The Mystery of the Thylacine*" exhibition throughout Australia. As it turns out the project of the reward was dropped due to Tourism Tasmania's inability to negotiate a premium with GRIP. (1) Additionally the reward may well have moved forward with GRIP getting publicity and promotional opportunities (in exchange for Tasmanian Tourism having a nil premium) if the publicity that went with the early, premature, reports had not occurred. The early stipulations before the negotiations fell through where asking for DNA evidence as well as records of previous sightings. (1)

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News Note: Yarlung Zangbo Grand Canyon Expedition

In October of 1998 a team of scientists and journalists set of on a 50 day exploration of the Yarlung Zangbo Grand Canyon (Yarlung Zangbo Daxiagu). The canyon is the largest in the world at 496.3 kilometers long (308 miles) and 5, 382 meters deep (17,657 feet). Situated in south-east Tibet (near Tibet-Qinghai Plateau) and has the Yarlung Zangbo River running through the center. This will be the first exploration of the entire canyon due to its inhospitable terrain and isolation, and the results may well be amazing. Earlier this year, in April/May, a small expedition ventured into parts of the area in preparation for this larger exploration. It has been speculated fauna and flora, as well as large waterfalls.

A series of these new falls was discovered in November 1998. The named Rongza Waterfalls consist of a series of 7 recently formed falls (estimated at around 20 years old) and lie along the main stream of the Yarlong Zangbo River. The largest of these being 30 meters high (98 feet) and 50 meters wide (164 feet) and at an elevation of 1680 feet above sea level (5500 feet). Another waterfall reported by locals is estimated at 60 meters high (197 feet) and 150 meters wide (492 feet). A British explorer named F.K. Ward in the 1920's claimed to have also discovered two Niagara Falls size waterfalls in the area. However, earthquakes in the area during the 1950's, according to the locals, destroyed some of the waterfalls.

What will come out of the expedition is unknown. Geological formations are now known that was not before, the possibilities of new species in the area may not be far behind. An early report from the area from the April/May 1998 preliminary exploration has been reported to show a mosquito-like insect as wide as a mans hand. Additional plans for the area include the possibility of creating a national park and harnessing the rivers power for energy and irrigation.

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Cryptofiction:
"The Monster of Loch Ness"
by Fred and Geoffrey Hoyle

The Loch Ness Monster, a classic cryptid, has been and continuous to be a subject of great controversy. Is the creature real, if so what is it? Theories range from surviving plesiosaurs to unknown large amphibians (or a giant squid as Dr. William Beebe theorized). Yet, there is no single agreed upon theory as to what the creature is, and thus within a short novel, or novella, another theory is introduced and proven correct, that is within the bounds of its fictional world.

The setting of the story takes place in and around the Highlands of Scotland. Although much of the tale centers on Loch Ness, it is not the focal point. The focal area is on the characters and what they go through to solve a mystery, the answer to what is behind the sightings and odd behaviors in and around the loch. Why are there strange energy balls being seen in the vicinity of the water? Why are the storms increasing in ferocity? Most of all, why has the bottom portion of the loch's water risen in temperature?

"Out of the water rose a dark grey and black log, at least the first impression was that of a log.

If the Monster of Loch Ness had been shy hitherto in showing itself, it showed no shyness now. At its nearest point, Tom thought about one hundred and fifty yards, a snake-like head lifted six feet from the water. The neck must have been fully two feet thick. Behind was a great hump, like a monstrous camel. It seemed the appalling creature was as curious about them as they about it. Tom recovered quickly from the first shock, unzipped his anorak, quickly adjusted the light reading and started shooting with his camera. The monster, apparently gazing at them, swam round the boat a couple of times. Through the view finder Tom tried to see how many humps the animal had, sometimes it was three, sometimes just one. That's right, he thought to himself, one hump."

There is the only detailed description of the creature, and aside from anecdotal mentions of the creature, the kelpie (as it is called in this chapter of the story) is a side occurrence. What encompasses the majority of the tale, and the basis for the theory introduced, is research into water temperatures within the loch. Under normal conditions the bottom of the loch should be about 5° C - 5.5° C, however testing showed it was at 7.8° C. Theoretically this is not possible unless something is stirring the water up and thus heating it up.

Using the surrounding lochs as controls, the water is analyzed. The findings turn out that Loch Ness has a lower level of deuterium present. Deuterium is often called heavy hydrogen, as it is a form of hydrogen with the same properties but larger atomic weight. Deuterium is also important for nuclear fusion. From this water analysis a theory is born.

" 'My theory,' John hesitated, 'is that something-some creature-is separating D, separating it to produce energy for converting it to helium. Heat must be produced and lost in the conversion process. That's the reason for the bottom water being more than two degrees higher than it should be. Heat loss from helium synthesis.' "

The theory then encompasses the creature, the kelpie:

" John looked hard at Tom, who just stared back. 'It adds up,' said Tom breaking the silence, 'except I don't see the Kelpie in the role of a nuclear scientist.'

'The Kelpie is something different,' said John defensively.

'You're not telling me we're dealing with two creatures?

'Yes and no. The Kelpie was made by the creatures on the bottom of the loch.'

'Made?' boomed Tom.

'The Kelpie is a telepuppet.'

'You're telling me the Kelpie isn't a thing of flesh and blood at all. It's a swimming machine, equipped inside with electronics?'

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So that is the proposed theory, the creature of the loch is a telepuppet, a remote submarine or vehicle. Allowing the true creatures of the loch to view the surface world. An original theory. The rest of the novel continues to prove the theory that the loch creatures, living in the waters depth, are creating energy and in the climax the loch is emptied and the creatures leave to take over our atmosphere, destroying our airborne travel and communications, but allowing us to live on the ground.

The theory that underwater creature posing intelligence in a manner that we understand, is not new. Ivan Sanderson writes in Invisible Residents:

"Either freshwater UAO's exist or they don't. The same must be postulated of large unknown animals, or "monsters" that are reported from fresh water. If both do exist, one is constrained to ask how many of the one are mistaken for the other, both being sort of unlikely and outrageous to the average person. Items like the famous Loch Ness Monster, and the other Longnecks reported from other lakes in Scotland, Ireland, Scandinavia, Russia, Siberia, Canada, and the United States, would most definitely appear to be animals as we know them, because of their conformation, their movements, and their general behavior; but there are others of an entirely different nature that have been reported almost as often. These have been said to look more like gigantic fish or whales; in other words, to have been spindle-shaped and to have exhibited either no external excrescences or what appeared to be fixed fins. These have usually been attributed to giant sturgeon, the best-reported case being from Lake Seton in British Columbia."

Also of note are the reports of unnatural lights in close proximity to waterways. Most common is the meteorological effect known as St. Elmo's Fire. St. Elmo's Fire is caused during a storm wherein the ground is charged with electricity and a high voltage exists between the ground and sky. The voltage decimates air molecules and a glow of gas appears. Thus, St. Elmo's Fire is caused by plasma. As our atmosphere is mainly made of nitrogen and oxygen the voltage produces plasma of a bluish haze. Additionally varies meteorological conditions cause diverse lightning effects such as ball lightning and swamp gas (will-o-the wisps). Additionally the annals of ufology have reports of unidentified submarine objects (USO) associated with the possible existence of underwater civilizations or people. But, there we must stop, as a convergence towards UFO discussions will not aid in the evaluation of this story from a cryptozoological viewpoint.

This story of the creature of Loch Ness posses a diatribe against the thoughts of the creature being of a biological origin. One is left to view the story as an interesting mingling of theories on underwater life, Scottish lore, scientific thought, and telling of a yarn. A mixture of fact, theories and fiction. A science fiction tribute to an enduring mystery, Nessie the Loch Ness Monster.

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Cryptofiction:

ThylaXene - A History by Craig Wellington

In this time of scientific revelations of genetic engineering there comes a story that is both encouraging and frightening in its implications. The short story called ***ThylaXene*** takes genetic engineering to another step, one to repopulate the world with extinct species as homage to our destruction of the planet. An ambitious and honorable task, but one that has complications no one would have envisioned, one reengineered species gains intelligence, the ThylaXene.

As the story goes the Earth's populations is nearly decimated by an environmental catastrophe on December 19, 2005 called Warning Day.

"When the electricity supply to your home dips for a second the lights may flicker, the TV drop out and the clock radio reset itself. That was what Warning Day was like. A global lightning storm swept out of control. Everyone who survived - about 29% of the Earth's human population - remembers where they were on December 19, 2005: Warning Day. No-one will ever forget those horrendous moments as the air became too thick to breathe, the birds fell out of the sky, and the trees withered before their eyes."

" The crash of biodiversity sparked an incredible sense of urgency and, therefore, immediate action. With human casualties of incomprehensible proportions, agriculture decimated, and flora and fauna rendered extinct on such a scale, man's need of his environment, place within his environment, and impact on his environment, finally became universally apparent."

Using new bioengineering techniques scientists are able to recreate extinct plants and animals, to replenish their environments. These recreated species included the dodo, Japanese wolf, South American condor, and Tasmanian tiger. The Tasmanian tiger believed extinct since the 1930's is recreated in a decimated world as a "neo-species" and given the taxonomic name of *Thylacinus xenus* or ThylaXene.

"In 2020 The Commonwealth Biological Restoration Laboratories in Australia revealed the ThylaXene to the world, and in 2021 The Government of the Australian Republic announced the island of Tasmania (human population 42000) would become the major testing ground for the full scale release of neo-species into an Australian reforested habitat. ***Extract from Sexton's Essential History v12.0, 2067."***

How this bioengineering is accomplished is also of key importance to the story. The reengineering of neo-species is done with the help of a new gene called the Plas-Gene. It basically fills in the gap in the genetic structure. However, the new gene was not fully studied and as a result mutations appear. These mutations are the effect of the Plas-gene taking the most adaptable portions of the DNA structure and passing them along in successive generations. Thus third and fourth generation neo-species vary radically from the initial reengineered species. An example of this is given as such:

"However, the documentation and publicity surrounding the use of articulate sign language with the family groups of Mountain Gorillas - a new-species now living successfully in North America, parts of Asia and Africa - is conclusive."

And with that the stories framework is set up. There are human characters that act against the ThylaXene neo-species, but as an overall appearance in the story they have a minimal role, as prey and creators of this New World. The essence is on how a species survives and what we do to aid or hinder its survival in our created world.

As the introduced neo-species breed and propagate the surviving species, "relic species", are pushed into extinction. And so it continued, on Tasmania the first attack on humans by a ThylaXene is in 2031. In subsequent time more livestock and humans are killed as the ThylaXene's adapt to a pack behavior. In 2034 a bounty is put out on the ThylaXene to eradicate it from the wild. By August 2040

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the evacuation of Tasmania of all human population began. In 2043 Tasmania was declared unsafe and uninhabitable.

And so, the ThylaXene was left to survive on its own.

"The apparently top-heavy ecosystem, with the dominant ThlaXene existing in plague numbers, continuos to function. In January 2054, the first reports from the air of the ThylaXene observed herding livestock and kangaroo stocks were verified. ***Extract from Sexton'3 Essential History, V12.0, 2067."***

There are certainly parallels between the story of the ThylaXene and the actual incidents of the Thylacine. Both had bounties placed on them as reported killers, although the Thylacine only of livestock. Both had attempts to eradicate them from the planet by governmental orders. But, in the case of the story the humans go to the way of the original Thylacine and are vanquished from the island and the ThylaXene left to prosper.

The Tasmanian Tiger (*Thylacinus cyanocephalus*) has been a favorite among many cryptozoologists. This is an animal that was known until fairly recently, but was deemed extinct due to mans destruction of it. It is one of the few species that others outside of cryptozoology rings believe could very well exist still in small populations. The fate was most harsh, with the arrival of European settlers in Tasmania in the early 1800's the fauna of the area had a new food source. As the years went by the farmers complained of the Thylacine killing their livestock (which is arguable as to what was killing the animals, men, wild dogs, Tasmanian devils, etc.) and so a governmental bounty was introduced. For 20 years (1888-1908) a bounty was placed on adult and youth Thylacine's resulting in over 2000 specimens killed. In 1932 the last wild Thylacine was killed, and in 1936 the last captive one died. Yet the reports persist of living Thylacines still.

Is the Tasmanian Tiger extinct? That question cannot be wholly answered to the satisfaction of science. Reports of this marsupial (pouched mammals) have been made regularly since their reported extinction. Although many sightings are of short duration there are some that stand out as being viewed by wilderness workers and hunters. Cases range from animals crossing the road to drinking from streams. As a remarkable looking animal with its broad-stripped coat, the Thylacine does catch ones attention. What becomes problematic is that reports have come not only from Tasmania, the last known habitat, but also from mainland Australia where the species was last known to exist 3000years ago. Additional reports come from New Guinea where the Thylacine is only known from fossils.

The mystery of the Thylacine pushes searches on. Correlations and variations between the short story of the ThylaXene aside the warnings issued are not. The story focuses on the reintroduction of a reengineered animal into a system it and we are not prepared for. Will we one day find the last remnants of the lingering population of Thylacenes in the hidden reaches of Tasmania or Australia? If so how will we handle it?

"The casualties are, as may have been expected, the species which survived Warning Day. Many can't compete and the rapidly developing neo-species are now causing a new wave of extinctions. As the biology and the terrestrial globe has so comprehensively recorded and collected, many are unperturbed by the extinction of "relic" species. There is a general lack of concern for this imbalance, but perhaps there should be. Will humanity one day need to re-engineer itself to keep pace with the rapidity of life in the restored biosphere?
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Media Reviews:

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North America's Great Ape: the Sasquatch
Author: John A. Bindernagel
ISBN 0-9682887-0-7
Beachcomber Books, 1998, 270 Pages
Available through Beachcomber Books at Box 3286, Cortenay B.C., Canada, V9N 5N4. Or try http://www.portland.com/books/reviews/bigfoot.htm (Maine Books Online, with a nice review/commentary by Loren Coleman).

This recent book (published 1998) details the ecology, behavior, and appearance of the sasquatch as a member of the primate family. By using brief examples from both well known and not so well known instances a biology of sasquatch is mirrored in context with that of the African and Asian great apes, the chimpanzee, orangutan and gorilla. The writing is fluid and easily understandable, with a glossary, appendixes, illustrations and source notes provided for reference back to original sources or obtained sources.

John Bindernagel (actually Dr. Bindernagel) holds a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin and is a Registered Professional Biologist in British Columbia, Canada. He himself has stated concerns over stepping forth and proclaiming his beliefs in Sasquatch:

"In my own case I used to be very concerned about how my interest in the sasquatch, if made public, would affect my reputation as a wildlife biologist, and hence my employability. When, after almost twenty-five years of research, I had reviewed enough evidence to be certain about the existence of the sasquatch, I finally came "out of the closest" with my interest in this species. Long-standing concerns about keeping a low profile on the subject -- which still surface in certain situations -- keep me sensitive to the feelings of reluctant observers reported to have seen a sasquatch. Several reports speak to this ambivalence in others."

More so than stating his feelings towards reports of sasquatch and how witnesses are weary to report a sighting Dr. Bindernagel's role as a biologist offers some new insights. By comparisons in simple language between the apes a correlation is drawn in dealing with scavenging, predation, sexual dimorphism, vocalization, and behavior in general. Additionally his nomenclature of sasquatch instead of Sasquatch (capital 'S') implies the known status of this creature, essential for a biological study. His reasoning in the book is general as he states in the first chapter:

"As a wildlife biologist I have approached the existence of the sasquatch in the same way I would assess the existence of any large mamma, be it the grizzly bear, black bear, or mountain gorilla. In short, my interest in the sasquatch begins at that point in the discussion when a skeptic finally asks, "If it does exist, what does it eat? How does it behave? And how does it survive the winters?" Having accepted the available evidence as sufficient to document the existence of the sasquatch, I feel that these questions we should now be addressing."

No statement as to what sort of ape is projected, only that the creature is real and shows commonalties to the apes. Additional evaluations are performed on misidentifications and their reflection on sasquatch.

This book is indeed a fitting addition to a library of anyone interested in a concise behavioral study of an animal.

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The Legends Continue: Adventures in Cryptozoology
Author: Marc E.W. Miller
ISBN 0932813-08-9-II
Adventures Unlimited Press, 1998, 231 Pages
Available through Adventures Unlimited, 303 Main St., P.O. Box 74, Kempton, Illinois 60946-0074, USA or http://www.adventuresunlimited.co.nz/usaindex.html under New Books Heading

This book reads as a hybrid of various scientific disciplines. Anthropological in the sense of native people, archeological in the area of past civilizations and zoological in the realm of animal life (not to count psychological for the stresses imposed by the author during his explorations). These elements make the book a readable and enjoyable story of one mans search for mysteries of nature. In his prologue Marc Miller shows this in his own language:

"My interest lies in the study of cryptozoology, which is the study of unknown animals. It has been my quest for the past twenty years to search out proof of legends and information regarding unknown species of the world. I am also an explorer and love the primitive people of the world with whom I have met and lived. My expeditions have taken me to the tropical forests of the Amazon, with head hunters who shrink human heads, to the African bush pygmies, to the deserts and their nomads, to the mongols of the snow, and into many other fascinating cultures. I've had the experience of traveling on the backs of elephants, water buffalo, camels, and Mongolian horses. I've observed the hidden cultures and secrets of voodoo, pyramids, forbidden religions, witch doctors, and shamans."

Whether it is through searches for the Yeti or living dinosaurs, the stories read as a travel log of the world. Anecdotal stories are collected in this travel and intriguing possibilities reached. For instances in the chapter entitled 'Searching for Stone Age People' the author makes reference to finding possible Alma signs:

In the distance we saw the outline of a camp. Several primitive tent-like structures made of wooden poles, called alachiks, were still standing. We observed recent animal kills. There was no evidence of modern day weapons, only crude sharp stones and goat horns. We discovered unusual rock pilings, possibly an altar to a fire God. Evidence of past fires was found in the center of the rock piles. Skulls, bones, skins, horns of mountain sheep and goats, and remains of other animals were scattered about the dwelling. It was our opinion that this may have been a primitive nomadic tribe who had observed us trekking up the valley. We were able to find some of the tattered skins along the wooden pole structure. This area would be able to support primitive humans with a wide variety of wildlife, plants, and water. There was no question now that these primitive nomadic tribes, Almas, were still roaming the land."

Included in the same chapter is a fuzzy photograph of a purported "*primitive appearing human form*".

The writing does skip around a bit and some statements are made without backing (as in the case above wherein the photo is identified as a "*primitive appearing human form*" with no explanation as to why it is such), but the emphasis is on exploration. On that emphasis the book shows the passion of the author. That, if for no other reason, makes the book readable. Marc Miller sums it up in essence himself in the last chapter dealing with the mammoth like elephants of the Bardia region of Nepal, his one and only legend found:

"The irony of it all is that I have even paid for such insanity out of my own pocket! What did I have to show for all the my years of searching and suffering? NOTHING -- besides legends, frustrations, and some permanent medical problems."

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The next edition of Crypto will be out in April of 1999

Seasons Greetings to everyone and have a safe and enjoyable New Year

If you wish to submit an article or other item for publication, contact the editor for guidelines:

Crypto
c/o Craig Heinselman
135 Elm St. , Apt. 81
Milford, NH USA 03055
cheinselman@msn.com

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